

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3996

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 7057

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: SHUM, MO

SUBJ: MOROCCAN JUSTICE MINISTER COMMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: (A) RABAT 6850, (B) STATE 298597

1. DURING MY 40-MINUTE COURTESY CALL DECEMBER 23 ON NEWLY APPOINTED JUSTICE MINISTER, MAATI BOUABID, HE COMMENTED ON RECENT HUNGER STRIKE IN KENITRA AND CASABLANCA PRISONS, HIS AIM OF OBTAINING RELEASE OF POLITICAL DETAINEES, AND MOROCCAN ATTITUDE TOWARD AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL. HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW.

2. HUNGER STRIKE: BOUABID INDICATED HUNGER STRIKE HAD JUST ENDED. ITS LEADER, EXTREME LEFTIST ABRAHAM SERFATI, HAD RESUMED EATING THREE DAYS EARLIER. BOUABID CHARACTERIZED AIM OF HUNGER STRIKE AS "POLITICS, PURE AND SIMPLE." THE EXTREME LEFTISTS HAD TRIED TO CREATE UNREST WITH THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF OVERTHROWING THE REGIME. THEY HAD NOT STATED THIS OPENLY AS THEIR OBJECTIVE, BUT INSTEAD HAD AIRED GRIEVANCES ABOUT SUCH MATTERS AS LACK OF BLANKETS, DEPRIVATION OF LEGAL COUNSEL, TORTURE, AND INADEQUATE FOOD. THEY HAD EVEN WANTED TO ISSUE A COMMUNIQUE FROM PRISON CONDEMNING SADAT'S VISIT TO ISRAEL, WHICH HAD NOT BEEN PERMITTED AS THE MINISTER DID NOT WISH THE PRISONS TO BECOME CENTERS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.

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3. THE PRISONERS HAD HAD TO END THEIR STRIKE AFTER GOM HAD PERMITTED A COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY OF ALL POLITICAL STRIPES TO EXAMINE CONDITIONS IN THE PRISONS, PROVING THE GRIEVANCES TO BE FALSE. VISITORS HAD INCLUDED JUDGES, LAWYERS (INCLUDING FROM EXTREME LEFT), DOCTORS, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE "FEDERATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN." THE FAMILIES OF THE PRISONERS HAD ALSO

BEEN RECEIVED AT A HIGH LEVEL OF THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE.
BOUABID CONFIRMED THAT ONE FEMALE PRISONER PARTICIPATING IN THE HUNGER STRIKE HAD DIED OF CARDIAC ARREST. HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS NO WAY PRISON OFFICIALS COULD FORCE HUNGER STRIKERS TO EAT.

4. BOUABID, WHO HAD HIMSELF BEEN AT KENITRA PRISON UNTIL 2:00 AM THE PREVIOUS NIGHT, INDICATED THAT THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY WAS CURRENTLY AT WORK WITHIN THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE ON A REPORT ON THE HUNGER STRIKE, AND THAT A COMMUNIQUE WOULD BE ISSUED FOLLOWING THE OUTCOME OF ITS DELIBERATIONS. (COMMUNIQUE WAS IN FACT ISSUED EVENING DEC. 23 ANNOUNCING END OF HUNGER STRIKE AND CONTINUING TALKS WITH THE PRISONERS - SEPTTEL.)

5. GOM RELATIONS WITH AMENSTY INTERNATIONAL: BOUABID COMMENTED THAT THE PERSONNEL AT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN LONDON WERE SERIOUS PEOPLE, ALTHOUGH THE ORGANIZATION WAS BEING MANIPULATED MORE AND MORE BY INDIVIDUALS WITH THEIR OWN AXES TO GRIND. HIS MINISTRY REPLIED TO ALL INQUIRIES FROM AI HEADQUARTERS. HOWEVER, THE MINISTRY ALSO RECEIVED HUNDREDS OF LETTERS FROM INDIVIDUALS CLAIMING MEMBERSHIP IN AI BUT ADDRESSING INQUIRIES FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. THE MINISTRY DID NOT REPLY TO SUCH INDIVIDUALS, AND DID NOT IN ANY CASE HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO SO.

6. BOUABID STATED THAT AI REPRESENTATIVES WERE WELCOME TO COME TO SEE HIM AT ANY TIME, AS WELL AS TO VISIT ANY MOROCCAN PRISONS THEY WISHED TO SEE.

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7. MINISTER'S PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS: BOUABID COMMENTED THAT HE HAD NOT WANTED HIS CURRENT JOB AND WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO REMAIN A LAWYER. HE HAD BEEN IN THE OPPOSITION FOR 20 YEARS AND WAS NOT ABOUT TO CHANGE HIS PHILOSOPHY NOW, HAVING FAVORED POLITICAL FREEDOM ALL HIS LIFE. HIS GOAL REMAINED TO OBTAIN THE RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL DETAINEES. HOWEVER, HE ADDED, FOREIGNERS -- AI AND OTHERS -- WERE MAKING HIS GOAL VERY DIFFICULT. THEIR INTERVENTIONS TENDED TO INCITE FURTHER POLITICAL AGITATION BY THE EXTREMISTS, WHICH IN TURN HAMPERED EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT MORE RELEASES.

8. BOUABID AT THE SAME TIME EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF THE EMBASSY'S INTEREST IN OBTAINING INFORMATION WITH WHICH TO REPLY TO QUERIES FROM WASHINGTON, RECOGNIZING THAT THE EMBASSY WAS IN NO WAY ACTING AS AN ADVOCATE OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OR ANY OTHER OUTSIDE GROUP. HE ALSO WELCOMED A CONTINUING DIALOGUE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES.

ANDERSON

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